

LETTERS

Talking About the Weather Used to Be Uncontroversial

Regarding your editorial "[The Continuing Climate Meltdown](#)" (Feb. 16): The data contained in the World Wildlife Fund report were absolutely accurate. We erred only in not crediting our data source, a 1999 overview by the high-level Environmental Research Institute, but have subsequently corrected the citation on our Web site and in other communications. The science was accurate; the citation was not.

We take exception to your efforts to cast doubt on WWF's long history as a science-based organization. For more than 50 years, WWF has worked with leading universities in preparing robust, conservation research in over 100 countries, expanding our knowledge and understanding of the planet and the species it sustains. Our advocacy efforts have been based on the results of our research—not the other way around.

Yes, we do believe in climate change because the majority of research, conducted by thousands of scientists, has shown it to be a fact and an urgent threat to the planet.

Your editorial misses the larger point. No matter how you view the science, the arguments remain compelling. We must move to a low-carbon economy. Beyond reducing risks to our planet, such action would make us less dependent on fossil fuels, more poised to create jobs in new sectors, and more likely to remain competitive in the global economy. What is the alternative, then?

Carter Roberts

President & CEO

World Wildlife Fund

Washington

Traditional, objective, evidence-based science has morphed into a new "post-normal science," which is only a collection of malleable interpretations of inconclusive or incomplete scientific understanding with interpretations chosen to fit a particular ideological agenda.

We were warned of such philosophical mindsets in the widely quoted statement by Stanford University climate scientist Stephen Schneider, "On the one hand, as scientists we are ethically bound to the scientific method, in effect promising to tell the whole truth, and nothing but—which means that we must include all doubts, the caveats, the ifs, ands and buts. On the other hand, we are not just scientists but human beings as well. And like most people we'd like to see the world a better place. The scientific context translates into our working to reduce the risk of potentially disastrous climate change. To do that we need broad based support, to capture the public's imagination. That, of course, means getting loads of media coverage. We offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we might have. The 'ethical bind' we frequently find ourselves in cannot be solved by any formula. Each of us has to decide what to do. It is a choice between being effective and being honest. I hope that means being both."

Another lesson would be that tens of billions of dollars of federal funding will likely get you the results you prefer. If the politically correct zeitgeist is accommodated, there will be no end of funding for research grants, favored congressional bills, and activist groups—it pays to be green.

One other lesson is that objective science cannot compete with dogma. Those who believe in climate change have not been won over by scientific argument. For them "the science is settled," and will remain so.

Charles G. Battig

Charlottesville, Va.

With all of the revelations about questionable research methods used by climate-change scientists, one would think that government regulations based on that research would, at the very least, be put on hold. However, one would think that such logic applies to Washington. The Obama administration still is proceeding with Environmental Protection Agency regulations of carbon emissions as a way around cap-and-trade gridlock in Congress. The current White House attitude that the legislative failures of 2009 can be reversed by executive-branch fiat in 2010.

The EPA's determination to regulate carbon emissions is, in many respects, just as remarkable as the tainted research that supports such regulation. If the EPA regulations are onerous enough, corporate America may be begging for cap-and-trade legislation in Congress.

Meanwhile, climate data suggest that the planet actually has cooled a bit since 2002. The truth is that we don't need to worry because of shameful, self-serving behavior by climate-change zealots masquerading as scientists.

Dave Palmer

Columbia, S.C.